# Kennedy Friend Denies Plot Role

12/18/75

By JOHN M. CREWDSON

Special to The New York Times

SAN DIEGO, Dec. 17—Judith Campbell Exner maintained today that, although she had had a close personal relationship with President Kennedy while she was dating two leaders of a Chicago crime syndicate, she had never acted as an intermediary between the Mafia and the White House.

At a news conference here called to dispel what she termed "wild-eyed speculation," Mrs. Exner, who appeared to be in her early 40's, said she had never discussed with Mr. Kennedy her relationships with the late Sam Giancana, then head of the Chicago syndicate, or John Rosselli, an associate of Mr. Giancana.

Nor, she said, had she ever been aware during the time she was seeing President Kennedy and the two crime figures that Mr. Giancana and Mr. Rosselli, were helping the Central Intelligence Agency to recruit agents in an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Mr. Castro's name, the woman said, was never mentioned in the numerous telephone conversations she had with Mr. Kennedy, beginning in March 1961, or during what she said were a number of private White House lunches in the President's office.

United Press International

Judith Campbell Exner at news conference in San Diego

Mrs. Exner, whose long, tan face was partly hidden behind saucer-shaped sunglasses, said that all of her discussions with the President, whom she said she had also seen on some occasions while he was traveling outside of Washington, were entirely "of a personal nature."

She repeatedly declined to elaborate on her relationship with any of the three men, and replied with a "no comment" when asked whether she had also known the late Robert F. Kennedy, the President's brother, who served as Attorney General in the Kennedy Administration.

In a prepared statement read

Continued on Page 37, Column 1

Continued From Page 1 Col. 6

before reporters and cameramen crowded into a suite at the downtown Westgate Hotel, Mrs. Exner, who was accompanied by her attorney, Brian Monaghan, and her husband of eight months, Daniel Exner, said that she hoped to "set the record straight" about her relationships with the Mafia, which have been the subject of leaks to newsmen from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and about what she called "distortions" about her friendship with "Jack Kennedy" by former White House aides.

The first account of Mr. Kennedy's relationship with the woman, then known as Judith Katherine Campbell, was published in The Washington Post on Nov. 16. The Post article reported that Senate investigators had been intrigued by, but had later discounted, the possibility that Miss Campbell might have learned of anti-Castro plots from one of the Mafia leaders and passed on her knowledge of them to President Kennedy.

The Senate committee's report on the C.I.A. assassination plots, released four days later, concluded that there was no evidence to show that Mr. Kennedy or any of his aides had been made aware of the plots while they were under consideration between 1960 and 1962.

### Mentioned Briefly

The report mentioned the Campbell relationship briefly, but did not give her name or sex or identify her as other than a "close friedn" of Mr. Kennedy who had also known Mr. Giancana and Mr. Rosselli. The committee said, however, that it had no reason to believe the friend had had any knowledge of the involvement of her friends in a plan to kill Mr. Castro.

Mrs. Exner said today that subsequent reports by the Scripps-Howard news organization, The Chicago Daily News, The New York Times "and other papers" had implied "that I was a go-between for the Mafia," and that leaks of her secret testimony before the committee had been "distorted so as to implicate me in these bizarre assassination conspiracies."

All the news accounts of the matter have noted, however, that the Senate committee concluded that Miss Campbell did not know of the conspiracies. She insisted today, however, that her sole motive for summoning reporters was nonetheless to clear her name. She said she had no wish to sell the rest of her story to book publishers or to the news media.

### Safire's Accusation

William Safire, a columnist for The Times, accused the Senate commitee in an article published Monday of having sough to cover up details of the Kennedy-Campbell relationship on partisan grounds, but the committee's chairman, Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, said the decision to include only the barest information about the matter in the assassination report was unanimously approved by all the members of the committee —Republicans as well as Democrats—after it was established that the matter was not relevant to the topic of assassinations.

Senator John G. Tower, Republican of Texas, the panel's vice chairman, said last night that Senator Church had "bent over backwards to avoid the appearance of a cover up," and that he did not believe the committee had been used by Mr. Church or anyone else for

THE

# President Kennedy's Friend Denies Any Role in Plot to Kill Castro

NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1975

"political purposes."

Mrs. Exner said in answer to questions regarding her relationship with Mr. Kennedy and the circumstances surrounding her introduction to him and to Mr. Giancana that she would "clarify" such details at a later timeand under unspecified conditions.

**Met in February 1960**

She said she met Mr. Kennedy through a "mutual friend" in Las Vegas, Nev., in February 1960, when Mr. Kennedy, then a Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, was beginning his successful campaign for the Presidency.

There has been some speculation that that relationship might have been initiated by Mr. Giancana in the Mafia's interest, but Mrs. Exner said today that she had not met Mr. Giancana until March 1960, while attending a party in Miami Beach.

Mr. Giancana, who she said subsequently introduced her to Mr. Rosselli, ran his end of the Castro assassination plot from a suite in the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach. According to the Senate report, however, that plot was not conceived within the C.I.A. until the following August.

Mrs. Exner declined today to name the friend who introduced her to Mr. Kennedy and then to Mr. Giancana, but Senate sources identified him as Frank Sinatra, the singer.

Lawyers for Mr. Sinatra, whom Mrs. Exner described as a "friend," had no immediate comment on his alleged involvement.

**She 'Probably Knew'**

Asked whether she had been aware at the time that Mr. Giancana and Mr. Rosselli were important figures in the Mafia, Mrs. Exner said at first that she "didn't really know," but conceded later that she "probably knew they were members of the underworld."

Although she said that, to her knowledge, Mr. Kennedy had not know that she was also seeing the two Mafia figures, Mrs. Exner added that she thought Mr. Giancana was aware of her relationship with the President, although she said she never told him of it or discussed it with the Chicago crime leader. Mr. Giancana was slain last June 20 at his home in Oak Park, Ill.

Associated Press

**Judith Campbell Exner in an old portrait.**

Mrs. Exner emphatically denied reports that she had called Mr. Kennedy at the White House from a telephone in Mr. Giancana's home. One source familiar with the records obtained by the Senate committee said they showed at least one such call from Oak Park, although not necessarily from the Giancana residence.

Asked whether she had ever called Mr. Kennedy from her own home in Los Angeles or anywhere else, Mrs. Exner, who seemed nervous during most of her 45-minute appearance, quickly answered, "Oh, yes."

According to Justice Department sources, the Federal Bureau of Investigation became aware of Mrs. Exner not through her relationship with Mr. Kennedy, but in the course of an investigation of Mr. Giancana's activities in the crime syndicate.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!